10. (new) A programmable controller comprising:

a processing unit;

a display screen including a menu-assisted user interface;

an operator unit including a button, the button capable of being switched to an active mode using a programmable function;

at least one signal input;

at least one signal output; and

a housing, the processing unit, the display screen, the operator unit, the at least one signal input and the at least one signal output being disposed in the housing;

wherein a switching function of the controller programmable in a programmed sequence according to predetermined functions using the menu-assisted user interface, and wherein an operation of the button is capable of affecting a switching sequence of the switching function when the button is in the active mode.

11. (new) The controller as recited in claim 10 wherein, an operation of the button can simulate the at least one signal input when the button is in the active mode.

12. (new) The controller as recited in claim 11 wherein the programmed sequence of the switching function is interrupted when the button is operated in the active mode.

13. (new) The controller as recited in claim 10 wherein the switching function can be interrupted by operation of the button in the active mode.

14. (new) The controller as recited in claim 10 wherein the operation of the button is performable at any point of the programmable switching function.

15. (new) The controller as recited in claim 10 further comprising a second button capable of affecting the switching function.

16. (new) The controller as recited in claim 10 further comprising a second button and wherein the second button is capable of being switched to an active mode.